

## Memories of Yesterday

(The following article was taken from the January 10, 1963, issue of the Clipper.)

Built a new house lately? Around 1800 in Duxbury, when ship carpenters worked for 50¢ a day (modern carpenters work about 8 minutes for 50¢), you could build a nice Cape Cod for \$400. We might add that in those days, ship carpenters worked, not 8 hours, but from dawn to sundown.

The Washington St. house now occupied by Mrs. Juan DeZengotita (Barbara Thomas) and her family was built for \$400. Barbara's great-grandfather paid \$750 for the Cape in 1851.

Yes, life was different then. At the turn of the 19th century, doctors received 50¢ for house visits. Duxbury was different, too. Before 1798, when

Washington St. was built, there was an ox-road that ran from Duxbury Bay past the house occupied by the DeZengotitas to Tremont St. This accounts for the fact that the house owned by the John Caldwells, which was built before 1800, faces south.

Was life austere in Olde Duxborough? Nay, not altogether so. There was a degree of conviviality, as the ad which appeared in the first copy of "Sara Mac's Budget" in 1851 indicates:

"BEER! BEER! The subscriber takes much satisfaction in announcing to the citizens of Duxbury that she can produce with great facility from her new and improved brewery, all kinds of Small Beer, at the shortest notice. She takes this method of expressing her grateful acknowledgments to the citizens, for their constant liberal patronage."

In 1815, Duxbury didn't have a single lawyer, "and only one of each of the other professions."

There was Dr. Hathaway, "ready to go at a call to any of his patients, rich or poor." He was a masterful raconteur, according to the author of a treatise titled, "Duxbury Fifty Years Ago." This medico was the life of the clambake.

More austere was the lone minister, the Rev. John Allyn. "Apparently without hope for himself in this world, he was ever willing to help the needy, to comfort the afflicted and to do good otherwise as he had opportunity. Riding about in his large square-topped chaise, sitting himself in one corner of it and guiding his old horse carelessly, he had always in the box-seat some cordial for the sick, or food for the hungry, which he gave, expecting no return, not even thanks."

A few years later, Methodist preachers came to Duxbury, bringing "awakenings and revivals." One, a convert, was Father Taylor, a former sailor who spiced his fiery sermons with nautical phrases and metaphors.

The quaintest Duxbury resident of that era was Aunt Sarah MacFarland, whom school children would greet: "Come, Aunt Sarah, make us a verse." She lived alone in a hovel divided through the center by a rough board partition. The outer door opened near this partition, on which an assortment of dried herbs hung. Aunt Sarah "scorned money as a gift, but would accept articles of food or clothing, though she preferred always to get them in barter for her herbs," a contemporary noted.

Time marched on, and we find ourselves now early in the present century. Years ago a Duxbury resident, who insisted on having her name withheld, recaptured the flavor of days gone aglimmering in an article she wrote for Ye Clipper:

"On the way to the Point School we usually crossed the ice on Blue Fish River, which was more fun than going over the bridge. Captain Parker Hall's schooner was usually in for the winter, and he made sure we reached the other side.

"At school, teacher tapped on the window with her wedding ring to call us. I recall that on winter days there were one or two apples on the stove to create a pleasant aroma. Teacher kept sugar treats in a drawer

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for babyish pupils, and one punishment was a spanking with a ruler. But there were times when our teacher held us on her lap and gave us chocolates, which she always seemed to have.

"I remember as a girl going to Peterson's Drug Store for anti-colic nipples and Walker-Gordon bottles. I remember, also, that it was our job to rush to the Fire Station and ring the bell when a call came across that there was a fire.

"Across the bridge was Tony's Barber Shop, where men gathered evenings to settle town and national affairs. We always waited for Papa to get there, then walked in and asked for favors. We felt sure he would be in a good mood and wouldn't refuse in front of his cronies. But how well I remember the morning his mood was something less than good!

"On this particular morning, the coffee was boiling as usual, and Papa took his usual sip. 'What in hell!' he bellowed. 'What's this stuff? This is the third attempt on my life. You'll kill me yet!'"

"Seems that the enamel coffee pot had been soaking all night in a solution of Sal-soda and water.

"That's how it was in Duxbury in the good old days."

(Tony's Barber Shop was adjacent to the old A & P store on Washington St. near the Cable House now owned by the Daniel Browns. --Ed.)